



LSNM Quarterly Newsletter, Fall 2018

Northwest News

CONGRATULATIONS, TIM MCLARNAN!



Tim McLarnan, attorney with McLarnan Law Office in Moorhead, Minnesota, received the 2018 Private Practice Award from the Minnesota Justice Foundation (MJF) at its annual awards celebration on November 7th in Minneapolis. Incorporated in 1982, MJF strives for justice by creating opportunities for law students and lawyers to perform public interest and pro bono legal

services. McLarnan was recognized for his representation of low-income clients through Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota (LSNM), the only free civil legal aid program located in northwest Minnesota.

McLarnan began his law practice in Moorhead after graduating from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1979. He became a LSNM Judicare panel attorney that year and has remained an active member throughout his professional career.

McLarnan has represented more than 400 low-income clients through LSNM since 1979, including victims of domestic violence, vulnerable and disabled clients, and others experiencing family turmoil.

Anne Hoefgen, LSNM's Executive Director, nominated McLarnan, describing him as a problem-solver assisting clients in difficult times of family and personal

turmoil. The role of volunteer attorneys is crucial to LSNM, which has only nine staff attorneys and one paralegal serving the free civil legal aid needs in 22 northwest Minnesota counties.

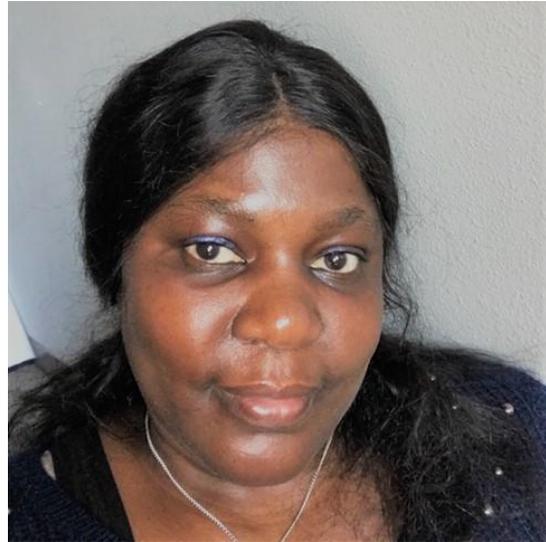
McLarnan has previously been recognized by LSNM for outstanding legal work to disadvantaged clients. McLarnan, approaching retirement, has already met with Hoefgen at LSNM to discuss volunteer opportunities in retirement.

(Pictured in the Photo (L to R) are Janine Laird (MJF's Executive Director), McLarnan, and Jack Sullivan (President, MJF Board of Directors).

OLSON AND SIBAJENE JOIN LSNM BOARD



Ben Olson



Muzamba Sibajene

LSNM welcomed two new members to their Board of Directors at the September meeting.

Ben Olson works as an Assistant Otter Tail County Attorney in Fergus Falls, Minnesota. The majority of his practice focuses on child protection, child support, and civil commitments.

Ben says, "While in law school, I was fortunate enough to gain experience working for public-sector organizations including Central Minnesota Legal Services. I quickly learned the value that no-cost civil legal aid adds to our society. Without these services, many people with limited resources would be without the legal information and advice that they need but cannot afford. I hope, by serving as a board member of Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota, that I can help extend the reach of our organization and others like it."

Ben and his fiancé recently relocated to the area, and look forward to spending more time outdoors and with family and friends who live in surrounding communities.

Muzamba Sibajene serves as the Intercultural Program Management Specialist at Alexandria Technical and Community College (ATCC). During her five years at ATCC, she has provided student services and created a welcoming environment for all students.

Muzamba says, "I have experience working for a CAP organization through

West Central Minnesota Communities Action in the Housing Department and saw firsthand the benefits of home ownership for low-income families. The alleviation of poverty is a passion of mine and an objective that I strive to achieve through my work at the college and in the community. The ability to provide legal assistance to low-income families can be the difference between a life of hope and success and a life of dejection and loss. Because ignorance of the law is no excuse, those in the know can easily take advantage of those unaware of their rights and the power they hold to change their circumstances. LSNM is the gap that bridges that difference and the way forward for countless numbers to live a more enhanced life. Funding of this organization, no matter how little, makes that difference a continued reality. Though not a recipient of their services, I have seen people who have been and who have gone on to lead productive lives as a result of their change in circumstance. I'm honored to be a part of the Board and will continue to advocate for them and their funding."

Muzamba has three adult children and enjoys studying new cultures and learning to how to cook new cultural foods.

WELCOME, KARYN!

Karyn Novak joined LSNM in October and practices primarily in Pennington, Polk and Marshall counties.

A native of Grand Forks, she earned her Juris Doctor from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 2013. During her law school career, she served as secretary of the Public Interest Law Student Association and was an active member of the Law Women's Caucus. She graduated in 2009 from the University of North Dakota with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice Studies.

She previously worked as an associate attorney for Hammarback & Scheving, P.L.C. in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. Her primary focus was domestic relations matters including divorces with children and custody matters for unmarried parties.

During her time in private practice, she assisted low-income clients through LSNM's Judicare program. In 2017, Karyn received the Advocacy Achievement Award from LSNM in recognition of her outstanding legal work making a difference to the disadvantaged. Karyn left private practice to work for LSNM to continue helping people receive legal assistance when they cannot afford to pay for it.

She says, "I believe free legal aid is important because legal assistance is a luxury to many people, but it is different from most luxuries in that most luxuries are desired but unnecessary. Legal aid is necessary for many people who do not ask to become intermingled into a legal issue. Low-income clients are often struggling enough to pay essential bills and to add in the expense of an attorney is just simply not possible. Providing free legal aid to low-income individuals often helps them focus on what matters most, providing a roof over their children's heads, food on their tables, and electricity. These are all things that people with higher incomes tend to take for granted. Providing free legal aid gives the low-income parties the information they need to protect themselves in situations where they may otherwise just give up and lose their essentials, even when they have a legal argument in their favor."

PRO BONO WEEK



October 21-27 marked National Pro Bono Week and offered an opportunity for LSNM to acknowledge the excellent work of private attorneys who share their time working with clients eligible for free civil legal aid. LSNM

greatly appreciates the pro bono attorneys who handled cases so far in 2018: Erik Ahlgren, Alicia Ankers, Elizabeth Brainard, Megan Burkhammer, Jessica Busse, Michael Cass, Gregory Donahue, Leah duCharme, Joe Ellig, Craig Foss, Ryan Fullerton, Brian Geis, Nan Haggerty, Julie Haseman, Jason Hastings, Josh Haugen, Allen Haugrud, Doug Hegg, Valeska Hermanson, Christopher Huether, Nicholas Heydt, Steven Knudsen, Tom Kuesel, Jeff Kuhn, Richard Lee, Kelsee Macintosh-Ellig, Jason McLean, John Minge, Logan Moore, AmyAnn Mursu, Kendra Olson, Deann Pladson, Steve Steinle, Scott Strand, John Minge, Matthew VanBruggen, and Brianna Zuber.

During Pro Bono week, LSNM offered a free CLE for LSNM pro bono, judicare, staff, and board members in Alexandria. Honorable Doug Clark, Honorable Michelle Clark, and Honorable Barb Hanson offered their perspectives on navigating parenting time issues. Joan Bibelhausen also presented on the "The Path to Lawyer Well-Being" report issued by the American Bar Association. You may access the report here: [Path to Lawyer Well-Being Final Report](#). The CLE event code is 262456. It is approved for three total CLE's, including one elimination of bias and one ethics credit.

You may join LSNM's pro bono and/or judicare panel by completing the [Private Attorney Involvement \(PAI\) Information Form](#).

MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE

Rhonda* felt overwhelmed when her employer changed the shift hours and wanted her to come in earlier. When she did not have child care for those earlier hours, her employer fired her. The employer also refused to pay unemployment, which led her to call LSNM. A LSNM attorney represented her at the unemployment hearing, and an Administrative Law Judge agreed she was entitled to unemployment benefits. Rhonda could breathe a sigh of relief that she could provide for her child and herself while she sought other employment. Shortly thereafter, she found another job with higher pay and a schedule that fit the availability of her child care. Knowing that someone would stand up and advocate for her and her child restored Rhonda's faith and hope.

Ami* struggled with trauma from abuse and rejection by her mom and mom's boyfriends. She was nine when her grandparents contacted LSNM for help in providing Ami safety and security. Her dad, who was incarcerated, agreed the grandparents should be the custodians. LSNM petitioned the court to name Ami's grandparents as her *de facto* custodians. The court found that it was in Ami's best interest for grandma and grandpa to have sole legal and sole physical custody. Ami now lives with the security that someone who loves her will be home to provide her nurture and care every single day.

Ralph* and MaryLou* were shocked when they received eviction papers. The papers made no sense to them, and they contacted LSNM. A LSNM attorney discovered a number of issues with landlord's actions and represented Ralph and MaryLou, who are both disabled, at the court hearing. The Court agreed that the landlord had no basis to evict this couple. Ralph and MaryLou are relieved that they can maintain their housing, and grateful that LSNM explained and helped enforce their rights in court.

*Client names changed.

WHO CAN BE A LSNM PARTNER IN JUSTICE?

People like you- who care, who want to make a difference, who want to make someone else's life better, and who want to improve their communities and help their neighbors- are Partners in Justice. Partners in Justice give at the highest level they can to bring equal justice to northwest Minnesota.

Partners in Justice may donate any amount they wish:

- Partners in Justice donate \$50,000/year
- Partners in Justice donate \$1,200/year
- Partners in Justice donate \$30/month

EACH DOLLAR MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

WHY BE A PARTNER IN JUSTICE?

For each Ami who receives free civil legal aid, there are three or four people who do not receive all the help needed to fully resolve their issue. LSNM helps the most people possible with the staff and funds available. The current funds of approximately \$2 million serve about one out of five of the free civil legal aid needs in twenty-two northwest Minnesota counties, yet does not fully meet the demand. In 2017, LSNM provided equal justice and hope to approximately 8,000 people. We have helped thousands so far this year, and will help hundreds more before the end of 2018. To fully help all the people who apply for free civil legal aid and have meritorious cases, the estimated cost for 2019 is between \$4.5 and \$5 million.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

- *\$840 enforces an employee's rights to unemployment compensation.*
- *\$1,050 stops a wrongful eviction or foreclosure and maintains stable housing for a family.*
- *\$2,625 provides permanent stability for a child exposed to violence, abuse or neglect.*

You may arrange for automatic bill pay through your bank, mail a check payable to "LSNM" to 1015 7th Avenue N., Moorhead, MN 56560 or donate via credit card through PayPal by clicking below.

Your contribution will be expended in accordance with federal Legal Services Corporation Act, 42 U.S.C. 2996, et seq. and Public Law 104-134. See www.lsc.gov for additional information.

I Support Justice!
(Click to be a Partner in Justice)

Did you know that you may also support LSNM just through your regular shopping or engine searches?

Shop Amazon via Amazon Smile and Support LSNM

Amazon, Goodsearch, and Goodshop will donate a percentage to LSNM if you designate Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota as the cause you support. Thank you!

Search Goodsearch and Support LSNM

Shop Goodshop and Support LSNM

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Serving Becker, Clay, Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, Roseau, and Wilkin Counties.

Serving Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wadena Counties.

Serving Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, and Mahnommen Counties.

*Administrative Office

www.lsnmlaw.org

LSNM
Provides Equal Justice
as the only Free Civil Legal Aid
located in Northwest Minnesota.

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